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## Does Civic Participation Stimulate Political Activity?

Jacqueline van Stekelenburg\*, Bert Klandermans, and Agnes Akkerman

*Vrije University Amsterdam*

*Activists are the engines of social movements. What spurs their activism? This article scrutinizes the role of civic participation in stimulating political action. We examine how the type of voluntary organization, scope of involvement and intensity of activity relate to political activity. Contrary to existing studies that collapse noninstitutional political activities into a single measure, we differentiate collective activities from individualized activities, enabling us to investigate how the type, intensity and scope of civic participation differentially stimulate political activities. Our sample included 14,787 participants in 71 street demonstrations. We show that membership and interest in activist organizations stimulates political activity, especially for those actively involved and especially for collective non-institutionalized activities, while membership in leisure organizations only stimulates individualized political activities, but not collective activities. We therefore conclude that civic participation is a multifaceted phenomenon associated with various political activities in different ways.*

### Introduction

Activists—people who play an active role in civic organizations—are the engine of civil society. They pursue causes, set out to improve living conditions, and spark our conscience. Dalton (2008) calls them “supercitizens,” people who demonstrate political knowledge, an understanding and interest in political matters and an understanding of how the political system functions. They watch debates during an election, attend a town hall for public discussions, and attend political rallies and demonstrations. What spurs the political activism of supercitizens? This article examines the relation between civic participation and political activities.

Civic organizations are assumed to fulfill a pivotal role in stimulating political activities, as they are seen as “workplaces” where “apprentice” citizens learn

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\*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Jacqueline van Stekelenburg, Department of Sociology, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Boelelaan 1081c, 1081HV, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Tel: +31 205986749 [e-mail: j.van.stekelenburg@vu.nl].

the virtues and skills of democratic citizenship (Norris, 2003; Putnam, 1993). According to Lichterman (2005) civic involvement stimulates political activity via a so-called “social spiral”: citizens obtain the civic virtues and skills necessary for participation in a democracy, and build a broader and more varied social network. In the end, members of civic organizations are more likely to be politically active as they have obtained the skills, the mindset and the network to be so. Theoretically, leisure organizations, are considered a major stepping stone to political activities (Putnam, 1993), as they are heterogeneous and built around face-to-face relationships (van der Meer & van Ingen, 2009). Especially active members should benefit, as face-to-face contact is considered to be more effective in creating social capital.

However, recent empirical research on political activity shows inconclusive findings. Although van der Meer and van Ingen (2009) found a strong, positive, correlation between civic participation and political activities, they found no support for the effect of leisure organizations. Moreover, while passive (or “checkbook”) members showed much higher levels of political activities than noninvolved members, the hypothesized additional effects of active participation were only marginal. More importantly, the correlation between civic participation and political activities was not explained by the proposed mechanisms of obtaining civic skills and civic mindedness. Hence, we know that civic participation is positively associated with political activity, but we do not know *how* or *why*.

In this article we argue that civic participation is a multidimensional phenomenon, with such dimensions being differentially associated to various political activities. Accordingly, this article contributes to the literature in at least two ways. First, we treat civic participation as a multidimensional phenomenon rather than a simple count of memberships. Inspired by Wollebæk and Selle (2002, see also Alexander, Barraket, Lewis, & Considine, 2012), we examine three dimensions and assess how each is associated with political activities: the *type* of voluntary organization (leisure, interest and activist organizations); the *scope* of involvement (few versus many affiliations); and the *intensity* of activity (active versus passive). Second, following van der Meer and van Ingen (2009), we distinguish institutional activities (i.e., voting) from noninstitutional activities (see also van Deth, 2014). Yet, contrary to existing studies that collapsed noninstitutional activities into a single measure, we differentiate between *collective* activities (e.g., demonstrations, strikes) and *individualized* activities (e.g., political consumerism, signing petitions). This enables us to investigate how the type, intensity and scope of civic participation stimulate different political activities. We find that different dimensions of civic participation are associated with different political activities.

This study examines how the type, intensity and scope of civic participation influence political action through civic mindedness and skills. The effect of civic participation is tested in three steps. First we analyze how the type, intensity and scope of civic participation affect civic mindedness and skills. Then we examine

how civic mindedness and skills affect all political activity. In the third step we test the effect of the type, intensity and scope of civic participation on political activity. Finally, we test the direct and indirect effects of type and intensity of civic participation on political activity through civic mindedness and civic skills.

### *Political Activities: Individualized versus Collective Activities*

To date, political activity has typically been operationalized as a simple summation of various activities (Alexander et al., 2012), a dichotomy of institutional versus noninstitutional political activities (e.g., Schussman & Soule, 2005; van der Meer & van Ingen, 2009), or some restricted set of choices (Corrigall-Brown, 2012; van Deth, Montero, & Westholm, 2007), ruling out the opportunity to examine whether different activities are driven by different mechanisms. In the current article, we distinguish between institutionalized, individualized and collective non-institutionalized activities following van Deth's (2014, p. 315) conceptual map of political participation. Van Deth focuses in his conceptual map on the locus (or arena) of participation; that is, voluntary activities located in the sphere of government/state are specimen of *institutional modes of political participation*, whereas those activities located outside the sphere of government/state are specimen of *noninstitutional modes of political participation*. Noninstitutionalized activities are distinguished from individualized and collective activities, in that no organizational aspect is involved. Van Deth defines them as *individualized collective action* whereas those activities where an organization is involved are defined as *collective noninstitutionalized action*.

We include voting as an institutionalized activity. Voting is an institutionalized activity, because elections are held at regular intervals, at predefined local, national or supranational levels, and operate according to preset rules. Noninstitutionalized activities (i.e., protest events), on the other hand, are more episodic and less predictable. These noninstitutionalized activities can always take place as there is no institutionalized rhythm prescribing when and how protest events should occur (van der Meer & van Ingen, 2009). In people's attempts to influence politics, voting may be substituted or supplemented by noninstitutionalized activities. Therefore, it is important to investigate if the type, intensity and scope of civic involvement affect the choice for institutionalized (i.e., voting) and/or noninstitutionalized activities.

Regarding noninstitutionalized activities, we distinguish between individualized and collective activities. We assume it is essential to treat these political activities separately, as they are differentially affected by the type, intensity and scope of civic participation. Individualized noninstitutionalized activities such as contacting a politician, signing a petition, or buying or boycotting a product can be deployed individually at any given moment. This is in contrast to collective activities such as strikes and demonstrations, that have to be coordinated, organized

and need the mobilization of participants. Hence, collective activities require more coordination, organization, and mobilization of resources, and thus, essential organizational networks rather than individualized noninstitutionalized activities. We argue that as coordination, organization, and mobilization take place in civic organizations, and especially in interest and activist organizations (van der Meer & van Ingen, 2009), it is important to examine how different forms of civic participation affect different political activities. In what follows we will theorize how the type, intensity and scope of civic participation influence these different political activities by affecting civic mindedness and skills.

### *Civic Participation: Civic Mindedness and Civic Skills*

Scholars have paid great attention to the positive effects of civic participation on political activity (e.g., Almond & Verba, 1963; Howard & Gilbert, 2008; Putnam, 1993). Civic participation is a stepping stone to political activity, in terms of quality and quantity (Paxton, 1999). Civic participation is said to create an informed, reasoned, and rational-critical informed public opinion. Civic participants develop civic mindedness, which nurtures trust and respect for opposing viewpoints, raises political interest, and reduces political cynicism (Paxton, 1999), thus enhancing the quality of political activity. Regarding quantity, civic participation creates feelings of duty and develops political efficacy. These civic skills in turn produce more proficient and politically engaged citizens (e.g., Barnes & Kaase, 1979). Thus, civic participation is expected to influence political activity by affecting civic mindedness and skills. This reasoning brings us to our first set of hypotheses:

*Hypothesis I:* Participation in civic organizations will be associated with higher levels of civic mindedness and civic skills.

*Hypothesis II:* Higher levels of civic mindedness and civic skills will be associated with higher levels of all types of political activity.

### *Three Dimensions of Civic Participation: Type, Intensity, and Scope*

The literature is inconclusive as to precisely which factors hamper or facilitate which political activities. Scholars disagree on the impact of the *type* of organization, or whether it matters if people participate in interest or activist organizations or leisure clubs (Van der Meer & Van Ingen, 2009; Wollebæk & Selle, 2002). Scholars also disagree about the *intensity* of civic participation. That is, they disagree about whether face-to-face contact—which active members have and passive members do not—is necessary for political activity (Wollebæk & Selle, 2002). On the one hand, one might argue that checkbook activism requires fewer resources like time, and energy, so people can engage in *more* political activities (Stolle,

Hooghe, & Micheletti, 2005), yet one might argue that checkbook activism crowds out other political activities, leading to *fewer* political activities. Finally, also inconclusive is the role that the *scope* of civic participation plays; scholars wonder if the number of affiliations with civic organizations affects levels of political activity (Wollebæk & Selle, 2002).

### *Type of Civic Participation and Social Capital*

Following van der Meer and van Ingen (2009), we distinguished between three types of organizations based on their primary purpose: leisure organizations (church, sport or neighborhood); interest organizations (trade union/professional organization); and activist organizations (women's, LGBT, environmental and humanitarian/peace organizations). Wollebæk and Selle (2002) examined whether the association between civic participation and the formation of social capital was affected by the scope, type and intensity of civic participation. They showed that civic participation indeed led to the formation of social capital (i.e., trust, social networks and political interest), especially for those with multiple affiliations, and when nonpolitical affiliations were accompanied by political ones. Intensity of activity, unexpectedly, did not matter. Note that their dependent variable was social capital; they did not consider political activity. Van der Meer and Van Ingen (2009) on the other hand, *did* take political activity as their dependent variable, and distinguished between institutional and noninstitutional political activity (see also Howard & Gilbert, 2008). They showed that the *types* of civic organizations matter. Individuals involved in interest and activist organizations are politically more active than those in leisure organizations. As van der Meer and van Ingen argued, people join interest and activist organizations with the objective of influencing politics or to express their view. In these organizations, "people come into contact with political processes and with a network of people who have the skills and mindset to participate politically" (p. 291). Consequently, members of interest and activist organizations are more likely to obtain civic mindedness and skills. Moreover, as we argue, staging collective action is the *raison d'être* of these organizations; members are more "at risk" to be mobilized for political activities than nonmembers. So, we expect members of interest and activist organizations to be more politically active than those in leisure organizations, especially for collective activities as these organizations accrue resources and the necessary social capital for collective action.

*Hypothesis III:* Members of interest and activist organization will be more involved in collective noninstitutionalized activities than members of leisure organizations.

### *Intensity of Civic Participation and Political Socialization*

Van der Meer and van Ingen (2009) distinguished between active members—those who invest time and energy in the organization, e.g., being a board member—and passive members, those who only financially support the organization, the so-called checkbook members. They hypothesized that the *intensity* of civic participation was positively related to political activity. Because active members, contrary to passive ones, are more involved in face-to-face interactions, they acquire democratic skills and values via socialization and network effects. However, they found no empirical support for their hypothesis. Although passive members showed higher levels of political activities than noninvolved, the additional effects of active participation were only marginal and not significant. Note that Wollebæk and Selle (2002) also failed to find an effect of intensity of participation on the formation of social capital. Thus, the intensity of civic participation has neither been shown to affect the social capital required for collective political action, nor to affect political activity directly.

However, van der Meer and van Ingen (2009) did not distinguish between collective and individualized noninstitutionalized political activities. Therefore, it might well be that their null results were driven by the aggregation of all modes of noninstitutionalized political activities. We therefore retest the hypothesis that intensity of civic participation affects political activity, but distinguish between collective and individual forms of noninstitutionalized political activities. Members of interest and activist organizations are more “at risk” to be mobilized for political activities than members of leisure organizations, and these organizations can accrue the resources required for collective noninstitutionalized activities. Consequently, active members of interest and activist organizations encounter more mobilization efforts and experience more social pressure (Klandermans, 1984) to participate in collective noninstitutionalized activities than passive members.

*Hypothesis IV:* Active members of interest and activist organization are more involved in collective noninstitutionalized political activities than passive members.

### *Scope of Civic Participation and Political Competence*

Van der Meer and van Ingen (2009) did not take the amount of affiliations—that is, the *scope*—into consideration. Consequently, we know that multiple affiliations affect the formation of social capital, a stepping stone to political activity, but we do not know whether the frequency and variety of political activities increase with increasing affiliations. Yet, Wollebæk and Selle (2002) considered the “consistent cumulative effect of multiple affiliations [...] as one of the principle findings of their study” (p. 54). They referred to Almond and Verba (1963), who found

Table 1. Overview of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Independent variable	Dependent variable	Direction of effect
I	Civic participation	Civic mindedness Civic skills	+
II	Civic mindedness & civic skills	All types of political activities	+
III	Type: Participation in interest and activist rather than leisure organization	Collective political activities	+
IV	Intensity: Active rather than passive membership in civic organizations	Collective political activities	+
V	Scope: Of participation in interest and activist rather than leisure organizations	Collective political activities	+

Notes. Bold indicates factorloadings above .20.

that number of memberships affect civic competence cumulatively: “Membership in one organization increases an individual’s sense of political competence, and membership in more than one organization leads to even greater competence” (p. 264). Thus, they proposed that being affiliated with more organizations, leads to an accumulation of political competence, which strengthens political activity. We therefore expect that the more civic organizations people are involved in, the more political activities they will undertake. However, political competence also involves coordination, organization and mobilization skills. These skills are *acquired* more in interest and activist organizations than leisure organizations, and are *required* more for collective than individualized noninstitutionalized activities. Political activism is therefore expected to increase with increasing affiliations, especially with interest and activist organizations, and for collective rather than individualized activities.

*Hypothesis V:* Increased scope of civic participation will be associated with increased participation in political activities, especially for interest and activist organizations, and for collective rather than individualized noninstitutionalized activities.

Method

To test our hypotheses (see Table 1 for an overview), we use a new dataset of 14,787 participants in 71 street demonstrations, the “Caught in the Act of Protest: Contextualizing Contestation” (CCC) (Klandermans et al., 2011); Van



Stekelenburg, Walgrave, Klandermans & Verhulst, 2012. This dataset comprises data on 14,787 participants in 71 street demonstrations in eight European countries (Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and Czech Republic) collected between November 2009 and May 2012. This CCC dataset contains rich information regarding civic participation (with measures on the scope, intensity and type of activism) and political activity (with a full battery of political activities). This dataset allows us to empirically test Putnam's (1983) proposition that civic participation positively affects political activity at the individual level, an empirical strategy that has been impeded by a shortage of good quality detailed datasets (van der Meer & van Ingen, 2009). Moreover, and important in the context of this article, 85% of the respondents of the CCC dataset were involved in at least one civic organization. Given the strong positive relation between civic participation and political activities (van der Meer & van Ingen, 2009), this is what we would expect. Hence, despite the fact that activists are a rare species, our selective sample of demonstrators comprises a sufficient share of active citizens. The relatively large share of passive and active members in a large variety of organizations, combined with detailed measures on civic participation and political activity, make this dataset highly suitable to answer our research question.

### *Sampling Participants and Collecting Data*

The respondents completed surveys distributed during the demonstration (500–1,000) to be returned to the university. Overall 32% of the participants turned in their questionnaire, fluctuating between 13% and 52%. Identical questions and procedures were employed for each demonstration.

In order to control for response biases we also conducted short (2–3 minutes) interviews with a subsample of the respondents (100–200) at the demonstrations based on questions identical to those in the printed questionnaire. The refusal rate for these short interviews was low (10%). By comparing the answers in the interviews with those in the returned questionnaires and by comparing the interviews of those who returned their questionnaire with the interviews of those who did not, we can estimate the response bias. Comparison of those who did and did not return the questionnaire revealed that those who returned the questionnaire were on average somewhat older and more highly educated than those who did not. The analyses we conducted to assess if the nonresponse could have resulted in biased findings and conclusions did not reveal any deviating outcomes.

We applied a sampling strategy in which each participant had an equal probability to be selected. Although circumstances inevitably necessitate variation, we aimed to keep sampling procedures as identical as possible for the various demonstrations. A demonstration was covered by a team consisting of a field-work coordinator, 3–4 so-called pointers, and 12–15 interviewers. Each pointer had a team of four to five interviewers. The pointers selected the interviewees,

**Table 2.** Factor Loadings for Political Activities and Percentage of Respondents Participating in Political Activities in Previous 12 Months

	Noninstitutionalized activities		Institutionalized activities
	Individualized activities	Collective activities	Voting
Contacted a politician	<b>.56</b>	.19	-.15
Signed a petition	<b>.62</b>	.04	-.01
Donated money	<b>.68</b>	.01	-.06
Consumerism	<b>.63</b>	-.05	.27
Strike	-.23	<b>.72</b>	-.05
Direct action	.18	<b>.68</b>	-.04
Demonstration	.06	<b>.76</b>	.15
Voted last elections	-.14	-.05	<b>.92</b>

Notes. Bold indicates factorloadings above .20.

while interviewers conducted the interviews and handed out the questionnaires. Separating these two roles appeared to be crucial in preventing sampling biases. As interviewers tended to select people they believed to be willing to cooperate, they ended up producing biased samples. The fieldwork coordinator oversaw the employment of the pointer-interviewer teams. At the start of the event s/he made an estimate of the number of participants. This defined the ratio at which participants were approached for interviews and given questionnaires. In “moving” demonstrations, the teams started at different points of the march and worked toward each other approaching every *n*th person in every *n*th row. At “static” demonstrations, the space was divided into smaller areas; in each area a pointer selected interviewees, taking the density of the crowd in that area into account. We argue that resulting samples are representative (or closest to being representative) for the demonstrators present at the demonstration.

Measures

*Dependent variables: political activities.* We asked our respondents if they undertook any of the following political activities during the past 12 months: contacted a politician; signed a petition; donated money; boycotted or boycotted products with political motive; took part in a strike, direct action, demonstration, and voting.

The activities loaded on three factors, explaining 54.29% of the variance (see Table 2). The factors respectively represented noninstitutional activities divided into *individualized activities* (contacted a politician, signed a petition, donated money, and boycotted or boycotted products, eigenvalue 1.86, explained variance 23.28%), *collective activities* (strike, direct action and demonstration, eigenvalue

1.47, explained variance 18.37%), and *institutional politics* (voting, eigenvalue 1.01, explained variance 12.64%). The various political activities were thus conceptually and empirically distinguishable. We created an individualized, collective and institutional politics scale by aggregating the different activities.

*Independent variables.*

*Civic mindedness.* Civic mindedness comprises high political trust, low political cynicism, and high political interest. To assess this we posed the following questions:

*Political trust.* "How much would you say that you trust national government/national parliament/political parties/EU?" (1 *not at all* to 5 *very much*;  $\alpha = 0.78$ );

*Political cynicism.* A scale constructed of the following two items: "Most politicians make a lot of promises but do not actually do anything" and "I don't see the use of voting, parties do whatever they want anyway." (1 *strongly disagree* to 5 *strongly agree*,  $\rho = 0.38$ );

*Talking politics.* "When you get together with your friends, relatives or fellow workers, how often do you discuss politics?" (1 *never* to 5 *very often*);

*Political interest.* "How interested are you in politics?" (1 *not at all* to 5 *very much*).

The four measures loaded on two factors (explained variance 64%), representing political trust (being trustful and not cynical, explained variance 40% eigenvalue 2.81), and political interest (being interested in and talking politics, explained variance 24% eigenvalue 1.66). Thus, we collapsed them into two indicators of civic mindedness: political interest and political trust.

*Civic skills.* Civic participation is characterized by feelings of efficacy. To assess this we posed the following questions and collapsed them into a single indicator of efficacy:

*Individual political efficacy.* "My participation can have an impact on public policy in this country." (1 *strongly disagree* to 5 *strongly agree*).

*Collective political efficacy.* "Organized groups of citizens can have a lot of impact on public policies in this country." (1 *strongly disagree* to 5 *strongly agree*).

*Civic Participation: Type, Intensity, and Scope.* We asked our respondents if they had been involved in the following types of organization during the past 12 months: church, sport/cultural, community organization, trade unions or interest organizations, environmental, charity/welfare, third world/global justice/peace, human rights/civil rights/antiracist/migrant/ women's organization and lesbian, gay male, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) organizations. They could check as many boxes as applicable and could indicate whether they were a passive or an

active member, in the case of multiple memberships of the same type, they were asked to tick the highest or most “active” category.

*Type.* Following van der Meer and van Ingen (2009), we distinguished between three types of organizations based on their primary purpose: leisure organizations (church, sport or neighborhood), interest organizations (trade union/ professional organization), and activist organizations (women’s, LGBT, environmental and humanitarian/peace organizations).

*Intensity.* Intensity ranged from noninvolvement, to passive and active involvement in at least one of the above described types of organizations. Respondents were allocated to the “active” category in the organization they were most active in, resulting in six intensity groups, namely, passive/active leisure, passive/active interest, and passive/active activist organizations.

*Scope.* A simple count per type determined scope. Scope in leisure organizations ranged from 0 to 3, interest organizations (only 1) thus from 0 to 1, and activist organizations from 0 to 6, overall scope scores ranged from 0 to 11 organizations.

## Results

This study examined how the type, intensity and scope of civic participation influenced political action by affecting civic mindedness and skills. The effect of civic participation was tested in four steps. First we analyzed how the type, intensity and scope of civic participation affected civic mindedness and skills (Hypothesis I). Then we examined how civic mindedness and skills affected all political activity (Hypothesis II). In the third step, we tested the direct effect of the type, intensity and scope of civic participation on political activity (Hypotheses III–VI). Finally, we tested the civic participation as stepping-stone-reasoning by testing the direct and indirect effects of type and intensity of civic participation on political activity through civic mindedness and civic skills. For the first three steps we conducted three MANOVAs: (a) type and intensity of civic involvement on civic mindedness and skills, (b) civic mindedness and skills on political activities, and (c) type and intensity of civic involvement on political activity. For the indirect effects tests we employed Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). We controlled for gender, age, and educational level, and standardized our measures. Despite the use of MANOVA and SEM, we make no claims regarding the direction of causation, as correlational data do not enable this.

### *Demographics and descriptive analyses*

Table 3 provides an overview of the frequency of the different types of political activities, which varied widely. Nearly 80% of all respondents signed

**Table 3.** Percentage of Respondents Participating in Political Activities in Previous 12 Months

Item	Percentage
Individualized activities	
1. Contacted a politician	35.0
2. Donated money	43.1
3. Boycotted certain products	56.1
4. "Buycotted" certain products	68.1
5. Signed a petition	79.4
Collective activities	
6. Used violence against property or persons	1.4
7. Took part in direct action	15.4
8. Participated in strike	23.2
9. Took part in demonstration	75.0
Voting	
10. Voting	84.9

a petition, compared to just 35% who contacted a politician. The collective activities differed even more. More than 79% of our demonstrators signed a petition. These percentages are higher than the average percentage at the EU level, which are 34% for signing a petition and 24% and 10% for contacting a local/regional and national politician, respectively (Flash Eurobarometer, 2013); 75% took part in at least one other demonstration.

Affiliations also varied widely, with 12,529 respondents (85%) being passive or active members in at least one organization (Table 4). The respondents in the CCC dataset were most involved in activist and interest organizations. The majority of the general population, in contrast, is involved in sport and recreational groups (26% European Values Studies wave 2008) while involvement in interest and activist groups is much rarer (8% and 15%, respectively). Thus the respondents in the CCC dataset are involved in varied levels of political activities and involved in a broad variety of types, differing in levels of intensity and scope of civic participation.

Table 5 shows the sociodemographics per type and intensity of civic involvement. Noninvolved participants were, on average, younger than those actively and passively involved. While the differences in age and in gender are small for most of the categories presented in Table 6, the composition of those actively involved in interest organizations shows that this category is, on average older, and consists of more males than females. Concerning the educational level, in the group of active members of interest organizations, the percentage of medium level educated is relatively high, compared to its prevalence in the other groups.

Table 4. Percentage of Respondents per Type and Intensity of Involvement

Organization type	Nonmember	Passive member	Active member
Leisure	59	14	28
Church	85	8	7
Sport/cultural	75	8	17
Community organization	87	6	8
Interest			
Trade union/professional/business	58	23	20
Activist	43	30	27
Environmental	72	19	9
Charity/welfare	73	19	8
Third world/global justice/peace	75	17	7
Human/civil rights	82	14	5
Antiracist/migrant	89	6	4
Women's organizations	92	4	4
LGTB organizations	93	4	3

Table 6 provides an overview of the means, and *SDs* of the dependent and independent variables per group. With one-way ANOVA contrast analyses (unequal variances assumed) we tested whether the means differed significantly for the respective levels of civic involvement. Regarding civic mindedness, those actively involved in interest and activist organizations were more interested in politics than the non- or less involved (active interest and activist versus noninvolved, leisure organization, passive interest and activist:  $M = 3.60$  and  $3.63$  vs.  $3.51$ ,  $3.50$ ,  $3.47$ ,  $3.51$ , and  $3.49$ , respectively:  $t(939) = -17.79$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $F(6, 14,410) = 159.11$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ ). Hence, neither passive nor active involvement in leisure organizations increased political interest ( $t(407) = -8.53$ ,  $p < .001$ ). We observed a similar pattern for civic skills: the non- or less involved felt politically less efficacious than those actively involved in interest and especially activist organizations (active interest and activist versus noninvolved, leisure organizations, passive interest and activist respectively:  $M = 3.99$  and  $4.03$  vs.  $3.95$ ,  $3.97$ ,  $3.96$ ,  $3.95$ , and  $3.96$ ,  $t(955) = -11.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $F(6, 14,412) = 59.73$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ ). Unexpectedly, however, active members of interest and activist organizations trusted politics *less* than noninvolved and passive members of interest and activist organizations respectively ( $M = 2.77$  and  $2.84$  vs.  $2.91$ ,  $2.86$ ,  $2.87$ ,  $2.91$ , and  $2.95$ ,  $t(645) = -1.98$ ,  $p = .049$ ;  $F(6, 7437) = 18.85$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ ).

The groups also differed in political activities. Concerning individualized activities, the non- and less involved are the least active (noninvolved, and leisure respectively:  $M = 2.37$ ,  $2.36$ , and  $2.44$ ), and members of interest organizations

**Table 5.** Sociodemographics per Type and Intensity of Involvement

		Noninvolved ( <i>N</i> = 2,258)	
Year born (mean)		1970	
Gender (% male)		50.9%	
Highest education	Primary	1.7%	
	Secondary	34.0%	
	Tertiary	64.3%	
		Leisure passive ( <i>N</i> = 2,018)	Leisure active ( <i>N</i> = 4,102)
Year born		1965	1965
Gender (% male)		51.7%	53.6%
Highest education	Primary	1.1%	0.9%
	Secondary	32.3%	32.0%
	Tertiary	66.6%	67.1%
		Interest passive ( <i>N</i> = 3,394)	Interest active ( <i>N</i> = 28,80)
Year born		1964	1962
Gender (% male)		49.3%	62.6%
Highest education	Primary	1.0%	1.7%
	Secondary	32.1%	47.8%
	Tertiary	66.9%	50.5%
		Activist passive ( <i>N</i> = 4,436)	Activist active ( <i>N</i> = 3,962)
Year born		1966	1966
Gender (% male)		47%	47.8
Highest education	Primary	0.9%	1.0%
	Secondary	30.7%	28.7%
	Tertiary	68.4%	70.3%

were also relatively inactive (passive  $M = 2.37$ , active 2.36). A one-way ANOVA with contrast analysis (unequal variances assumed,  $F(6, 14.780) = 366.22$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .13$ ) revealed that members of activist organizations were significantly the most engaged in individualized activities, both passive ( $M = 2.50$ ) and active ( $M = 2.78$ ,  $t(1,629) = -10.91$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The less and noninvolved were, as expected, less active in collective activities than those actively involved (noninvolved, leisure, passive interest and activist versus active interest and activist respectively  $M = 2.22, 2.23, 2.28, 2.22$ , and  $2.13$  vs.  $2.87$  and  $2.57$ ,  $t(1,568) = -25.56$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $F(6, 13715) = 210.68$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$ ). The

**Table 6.** Means and SDs of the (In)Dependent Variables per Type and Intensity of Involvement

Noninvolved		<i>M (SD)</i>	
1. Political trust		2.91	(0.73)
2. Political interest		3.51	(0.69)
3. Civic skills		3.95	(0.68)
4. Individualized activities		2.37	(1.19)
5. Collective activities		2.22	(1.02)
6. Voting (% yes)		74.9%	
Leisure passive		<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
1. Political trust	2.86 (0.74)	1. Political trust	2.87 (0.75)
2. Political interest	3.50 (0.68)	2. Political interest	3.47 (0.68)
3. Civic skills	3.97 (0.67)	3. Civic skills	3.96 (0.69)
4. Individualized activities	2.36 (1.17)	4. Individualized activities	2.44 (1.16)
5. Collective activities	2.23 (1.05)	5. Collective activities	2.28 (1.11)
6. Voting (% yes)	91.1%	6. Voting (% yes)	89.9%
Interest passive		<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
1. Political trust	2.91 (0.73)	1. Political trust	2.77 (0.77)
2. Political interest	3.51 (0.69)	2. Political interest	3.60 (0.67)
3. Civic skills	3.95 (0.68)	3. Civic skills	3.99 (0.70)
4. Individualized activities	2.37 (1.19)	4. Individualized activities	2.36 (1.21)
5. Collective activities	2.22 (1.02)	5. Collective activities	2.87 (1.27)
6. Voting (% yes)	91.1%	6. Voting (% yes)	89.9%
Activist passive		<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
1. Political trust	2.95 (0.72)	1. Political trust	2.84 (0.75)
2. Political interest	3.49 (0.66)	2. Political interest	3.63 (0.66)
3. Civic skills	3.96 (0.66)	3. Civic skills	4.03 (0.69)
4. Individualized activities	2.50 (1.04)	4. Individualized activities	2.78 (1.07)
5. Collective activities	2.13 (1.01)	5. Collective activities	2.57 (1.20)
6. Voting (% yes)	89.1%	6. Voting (% yes)	85.6%

noninvolved voted, as expected, significantly the least (74.9 %), followed by active members of activist organizations (85.6%); the other groups hover around 90% ( $t(347.05) = -7.43, p < .001$ ;  $F(6, 14285) = 51.50, p < .001, \eta^2 = .02$ ).

Thus the groups differed systematically in terms of civic mindedness, civic skills and political activities. Taken together, this is a first indication that type of organization, and intensity of involvement affect civic mindedness, skills and



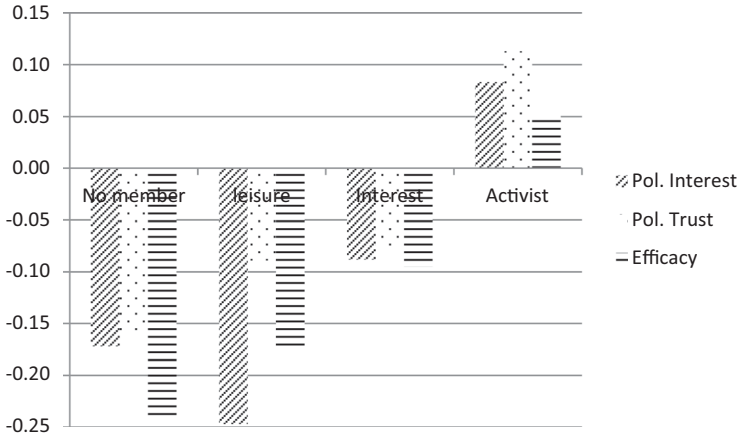


Fig. 1. Civic mindedness and skills per type of involvement.

political activities. In what follows we test this in multivariate analyses controlled for age, gender and educational level.

#### *Does Civic Participation Nurture Civic Mindedness and Civic Skills?*

We expected civic participation to nurture civic mindedness and civic skills. Figure 1 provides an overview of the MANOVA results. Those involved in civic organizations were, as expected, more civic minded (political interest  $F(3, 6820) = 33.79, p < .001, \eta^2 = .02$  and political trust  $F(3, 6820) = 29.71, p < .001, \eta^2 = .013$ ) and they possessed more civic skills (political efficacy  $F(3, 6820) = 29.31, p < .001, \eta^2 = .013$ ). However, this was only the case for those involved in interest and activist organizations. Hence, those involved in leisure organizations were only more trusting than the noninvolved,  $M = -0.11$  and  $-0.21, t(3,656) = -2.00, p = .04$ , but did not differ from the noninvolved in terms of political interest,  $M = -0.18$  and  $-0.23, t(3,656) = 1.26, ns$ , and efficacy,  $M = -0.17$  and  $-0.17, t(3,686) = -0.14, ns$ . Thus, Hypothesis I was partly confirmed. Civic participation nurtured civic mindedness and skills, but only for those involved in interest and activist organizations. Those involved in leisure organizations trusted politics more than the noninvolved, but were no more interested in politics nor more efficacious than the noninvolved.

#### *Do Civic Mindedness and Civic Skills Affect Political Activity?*

We expected that higher levels of civic mindedness and civic skills would be associated with higher levels of political activity. Table 7 provides an overview

Table 7. Correlations of Civic Mindedness and Skills per Type of Political Activity

	Political interest	Political trust	Civic skills
Individualized activities	.37**	.17**	.25**
Collective activities	.23**	-.25**	.08**
Voting	.08**	.18**	.05**

Note. \*\*significant at  $p < .01$  level.

of the correlations between civic mindedness and skills and the different political activities. Political interest, trust and efficacy were positively and significantly related to voting, and individualized and collective noninstitutionalized activities (ranging from  $r = .05, p < .001$  for efficacy and voting to  $r = .37, p < .001$  for political interest and individualized activities). Thus, the more civic minded people were, and the more civic skills they possessed, the more likely they were to vote, and embark on individualized and collective noninstitutionalized activities. With one notable exception, that is, higher levels of collective noninstitutionalized activities were associated with *lower* levels of trust. Note that the associational pattern varied for the different political activities. Correlations between civic mindedness and skills and voting were relatively low, while they were stronger for noninstitutionalized activities, and particularly individualized activities. This seems to indicate that the less ritualized, organized and mobilized an activity was, the more civic mindedness and civic skills it required. In sum, Hypothesis II was partly confirmed, higher levels of civic mindedness and civic skills were associated with higher levels of voting and individualized and collective noninstitutionalized political activities, except for collective activities, which were related to lower levels of trust.

*Do Type, Intensity, and Scope of Civic Participation Affect Political Activity?*

The previous section addressed the question of whether civic organizations are indeed the “workplaces” where “apprentice” citizens learn the virtues and skills of democratic citizenship. In this section we examine if the type, intensity and scope of civic involvement stimulate political activities.

*Type of civic involvement.* We expected and found that members of interest and activist organizations were more politically active than members of leisure organizations (see Figure 2), both institutional (voting,  $F(3, 13512) = 44.94, p < .001, \eta^2 = .011$ , and noninstitutional activities (individualized:  $F(3, 13837) = 520.30, p < .001, \eta^2 = .11$ , collective  $F(3, 12924) = 90.41, p < .001, \eta^2 = .021$ ). This confirmed Hypothesis III. Note that members of interest organizations

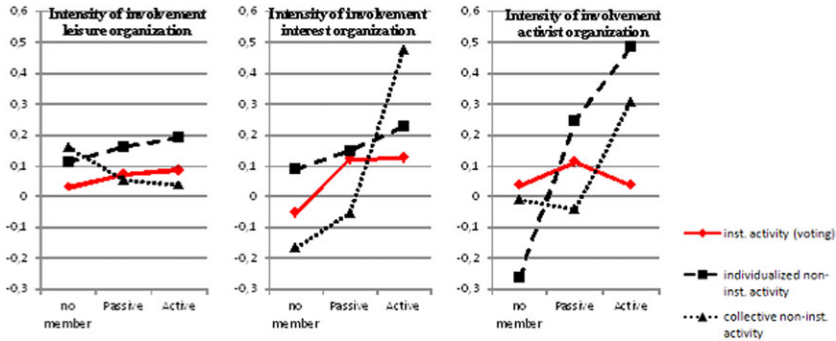


Fig. 2. Type of political activity by type and intensity of civic involvement.

embarked more on collective activities, while members of activist organizations were significantly more involved in individualized activities.

*Intensity of civic involvement.* Contrary to previous null findings, we hypothesized and found that intensity of civic participation affected political activity. That is, active members of interest and activist organizations were more involved in collective noninstitutionalized activities than passive members, activist:  $M = -0.18$  and  $0.04$ ,  $t(4,353) = -8.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ; interest:  $M = -0.30$  and  $0.40$ ,  $t(5,907) = -23.60$ ,  $p < .001$ . Hence, distinguishing individualized from collective activities revealed that, contrary to previous null-findings, intensity of involvement did matter. That is, active members *were* more involved in collective activities, especially those actively involved in interest organizations. This confirmed Hypothesis IV.

*Scope of civic involvement.* We hypothesized and found that political activism increased with increasing affiliations, especially for interest and activist organizations, and for collective rather than individualized activities. Political activity did, as expected, not increase with increasing leisure organizations affiliations, voting:  $F(3, 13837) = 0.93$ ,  $p = .43$ , individualized:  $F(3, 13837) = 0.43$ ,  $p = .73$ , collective  $F(3, 12924) = 2.06$ ,  $p = .10$ . However, as expected, collective activities increased with increasing interest and activist affiliations, collective interest:  $F(1, 13837) = 4.85$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ , collective activist  $F(7, 12924) = 3.73$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .002$ . Individualized activities did not increase with increasing interest affiliations  $F(1, 13837) = 1.85$ ,  $p = .17$ . However, they did unexpectedly increase with increasing activist affiliations  $F(7, 12924) = 31.60$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .02$ . Thus, Hypothesis V was partly confirmed, that is, increasing scope of interest and activist organizations increased—as expected—collective activities, but increasing activist affiliations—unexpectedly—also increased individualized activities.

*Does Civic Involvement Affect Political Activity through Civic Mindedness and Skills?*

In this section we tested the direct and indirect effects of the type and intensity of civic participation on political activity through civic mindedness and civic skills. Employing AMOS, we conducted six SEM analyses in which we examined the direct and indirect effects for the noninvolved with those passively or actively involved in leisure, interest and activist organizations. If civic mindedness and skills indeed function as stepping stones to political activity, we expected to observe that civic involvement affected political activity through civic mindedness and skills. In fact, civic involvement was expected to increase political activity, especially for active involvement in interest and activist organization and for collective rather than individualized activities. Our analyses regarding the relative impact of political interest, trust and efficacy are more exploratory. The path models are presented in Figures 3–5, nonsignificant paths are represented by dashed lines, all other paths are significant at  $p < .001$ ; total effects are reported between brackets. Table 8 provides an overview of the total, direct and indirect effects of political trust, interest and efficacy separated (Total and direct effects in Figures 3–5 may slightly differ from those in Table 6 due to the fact that bootstrapping does not allow missing values).

Figure 3 presents the models for passive (left) and active (right) members involved in leisure organizations, passive:  $\chi^2(7, 2527) = 6.21, p = .52$ , CFI = 1.00, NFI = .99 and RMSEA < .001; active  $\chi^2(6, 3643) = 7.92, p = .24$ , CFI = 1.00, NFI = .99 and RMSEA = .009. Passive involvement in leisure organization does not increase civic mindedness nor skills (–.06, –.07 and .01 respectively, *ns*). Its direct effect on individual activities is marginal (.14,  $p < .001$ ), on voting 0, and on collective activities even negative (–.09,  $p < .001$ ). The effect of passive involvement on individual activities was not significant via civic mindedness or skills affected (total .15,  $p < .001$  and direct .14,  $p < .001$ ). Active involvement in leisure organizations, however, was positively related to individual activities through civic skills, total .39, direct .35, indirect effect = .05,  $p < .001$ . And although active involvement in leisure organizations was positively related to voting, this was not affected by civic mindedness or by skills (total .30 direct .30, *ns*). Active involvement in leisure organizations was not related to collective activities and is neither affected by civic mindedness nor skills (total .02, *ns*, direct .03, *ns*).

Figure 4 presents the models for those passive (left) and active (right) involved in interest organizations, passive:  $\chi^2(1, 11907) = 5.68, p = .02$ , CFI = 1.00, NFI = .99 and RMSEA = .02; active:  $\chi^2(2, 10351) = 3.66, p = .16$ , CFI = 1.00, NFI = .99 and RMSEA = .009. Most notable was that contrary to the result in leisure organizations, civic mindedness and skills were significantly affected by involvement in interest organizations. With trust as a notable exception, passive

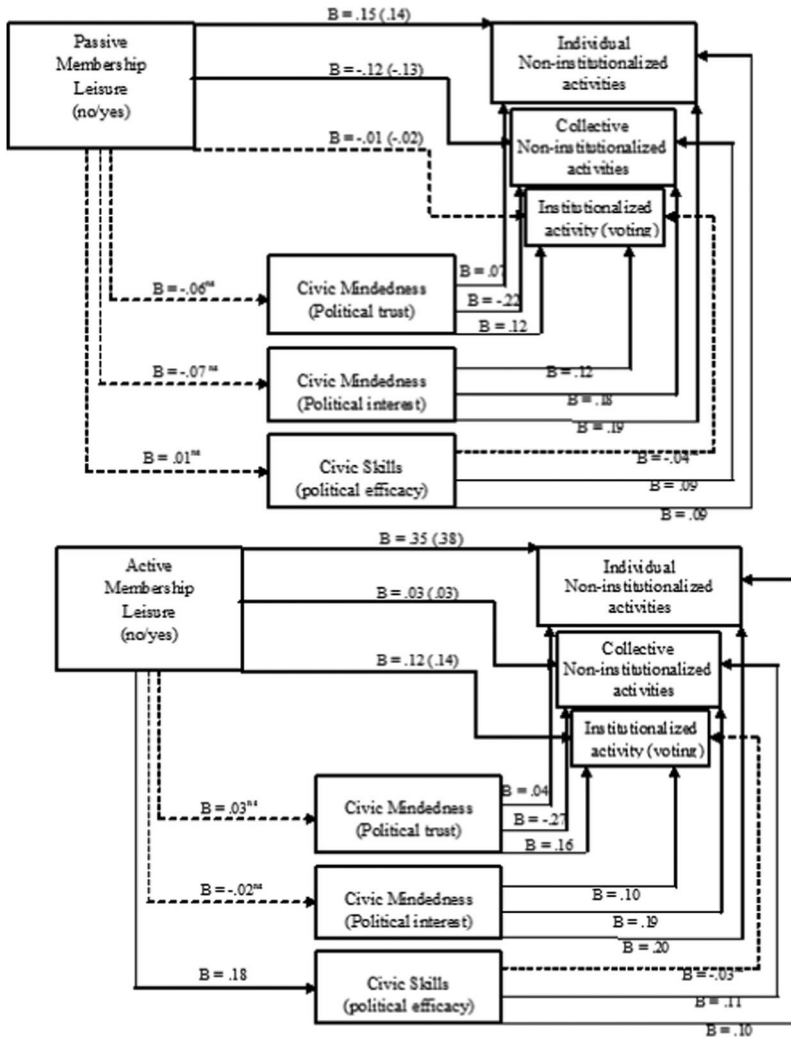


Fig. 3. Mediation models passive/active involvement in leisure organizations.

involvement in interest organizations was positively related to trust in politics (.35,  $p < .001$ ), while active involvement was not ( $-.01$ ,  $ns$ ). Yet, for both groups, the less they trusted politics, the more they embarked on collective activities. Passive involvement in interest organizations stimulated individual activities through political trust and efficacy (total .15,  $p < .001$ , direct .10,  $p < .001$ , indirect trust .01 and efficacy .09,  $p < .001$ ). These indirect effects were not observed for collective

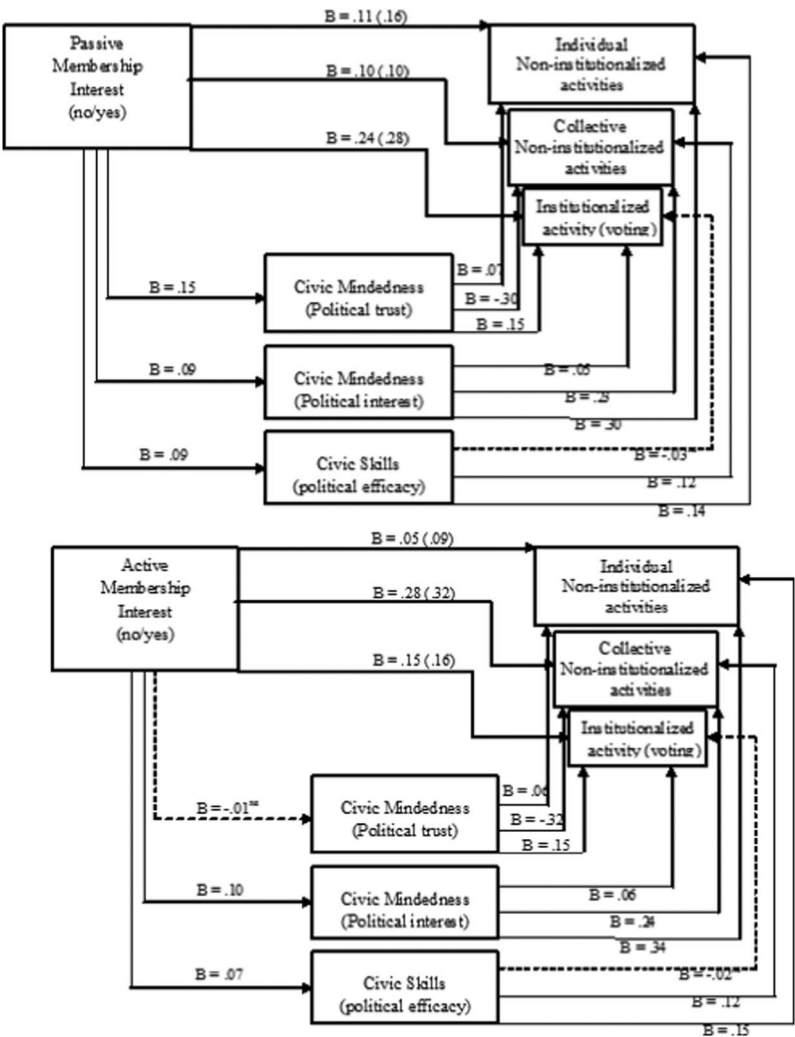


Fig. 4. Mediation models passive/active involvement in interest organizations.

activities and voting. Their significant total effects are largely due to direct rather than indirect effects (total/direct collective .10,  $p < .001$  and .11,  $p < .001$ ; voting .25,  $p < .001$  and .23,  $p < .001$ ).

Active involvement in interest organizations, on the other hand, showed a different pattern. Those active in interest organizations undertook the most collective activities, stimulated through civic mindedness and skills (total .33,

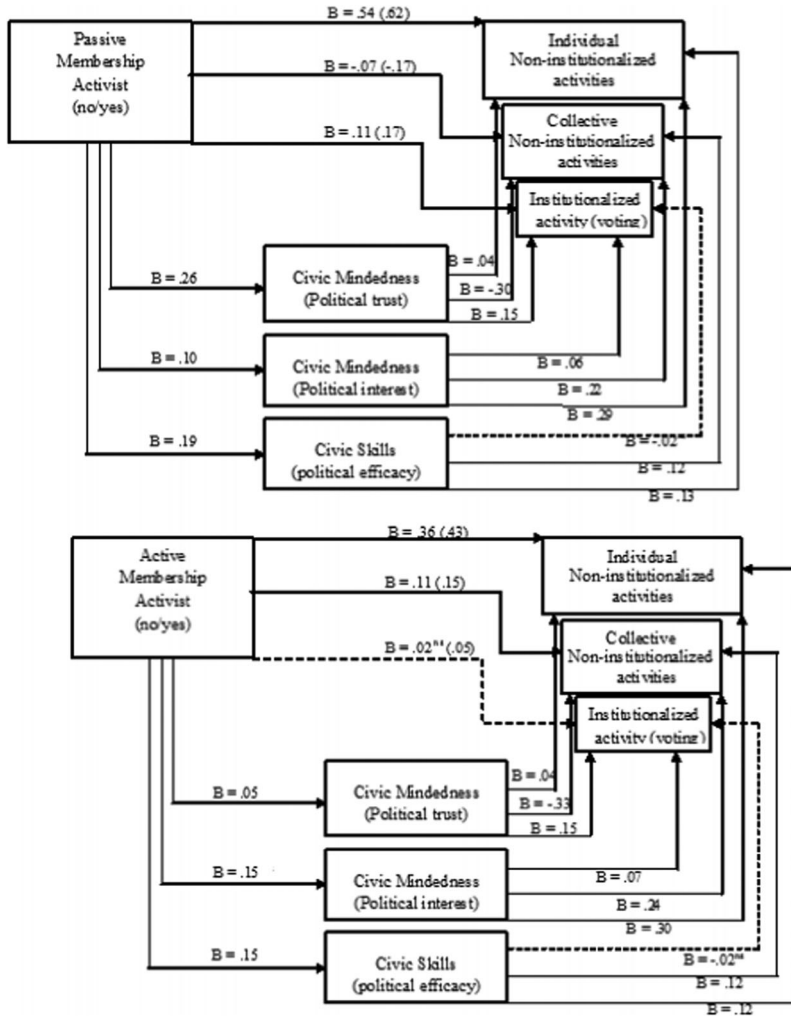


Fig. 5. Mediation models passive/active involvement in activist organizations.

direct .28 and indirect .01 via trust, .04 via political interest, and  $-.05$  via political efficacy,  $p, .001$ ). Interestingly, the indirect effect of efficacy is negative ( $-.05$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indicating that the strong positive effect of active involvement in interest organizations on collective activities is dampened when respondents deem such actions inefficacious. And, although much weaker, it also affected their individual activities through civic mindedness and skills (total .05, direct .01 and indirectly

Table 8. Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects of the Mediated Relationships between Civic Involvement and Political Activity

	Total effect $\beta$ (95% CI)	Direct effect $\beta$ (95% CI)	Indirect effects			Mediation
			Civic mindedness		Civic skills	
			Trust	Political interest	Efficacy	
<i>Passive membership leisure on:</i>						
Individualized activities	.15 (.11–.23)	.14 (.08–.19)	.02 (.01–.03)	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	.10 (.09–.11)	No mediation
Collective activities	–.10 (–.15–.03)	–.09 (–.12–.01)	.02 (.01–.02)	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	–.04 (–.06–.03)	No mediation
Voting	.03 (.01–.04)	.00 (.00,00) <sup>ns</sup>	.01 (.00–.02)	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	.09 (.08–.11)	No mediation
<i>Active membership leisure on:</i>						
Individualized activities	.39 (.24–.45)	.34 (.23–.42)	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	.05 (.03–.06)	Via skills
Collective activities	.02(–.11–.14) <sup>ns</sup>	.03 (–.08–.15) <sup>ns</sup>	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	–.06 (–.08–.03)	No mediation
Voting	.30 (.15–.44)	.29 (.14–.42)	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	.09 (.07–.11)	No mediation
<i>Passive membership interest on:</i>						
Individualized activities	.15 (.09 –.20)	.10 (.04 –.15)	.01 (.01–.02)	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	.09 (.08–.10)	Via trust, skills
Collective activities	.10 (.04 –.16)	.11 (.07 –.17)	.01 (.01–.02)	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	–.05 (–.06–.03)	No mediation
Voting	.25 (.19–.30)	.23 (.16 –.27)	.01 (.01–.02)	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	.08 (.06–.09)	No mediation
<i>Active membership interest on:</i>						
Individualized activities	.05 (.02 –.08)	.01 (–.02,04) <sup>ns</sup>	.02 (.01–.03)	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	.10 (.08–.11)	Via trust, skills
Collective activities	.33 (.30 –.36)	.28 (.26–.32)	.01 (.01–.02)	.04 (.00–.07)	–.05 (–.07–.04)	Via trust, political interest, skills
Voting	.13 (.10–.16)	.13 (.10–.16)	.00 (.00–.01)	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	.08 (.07–.10)	No mediation
<i>Passive membership activist on:</i>						
Individualized activities	.55 (.50–.61)	.47 (.42–.52)	.02 (.01–.03)	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	.08 (.07–.09)	Via trust, skills
Collective activities	–.12 (–.18 –.07)	–.06 (–.11–.00)	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	–.10(–.12–.09)	No mediation
Voting	.16 (.13–.24)	.12 (.09–.17)	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	.07 (.05–.08)	No mediation
<i>Active membership activist on:</i>						
Individualized activities	.41 (.38–.44)	.33 (.31–.36)	.02 (.01–.03)	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	.09 (.08–.10)	Via trust, skills
Collective activities	.14 (.11–.17)	.11 (.08–.14)	.01 (.01–.02)	.03 (.01–.06)	–.05 (–.06–.03)	Via trust, political interest, skills
Voting	.05 (.03–.08)	.02 (.00–.04)	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	.00 <sup>ns</sup>	.08 (.07–.09)	No mediation

Notes. ns = non significant.



via trust .02 and skills .10,  $p < .001$ ). Active involvement in interest organizations, finally, is positively related to voting, yet this is neither through civic mindedness nor skills (total .13, direct .13, *ns*).

Figure 5 depicts the models for those passive (left) and active (right) involved in activist organizations, passive:  $\chi^2(1, 10825) = 1.98$ ,  $p = .16$ , CFI = 1.00, NFI = 1.00 and RMSEA = .01; active:  $\chi^2(2, 10351) = 5.74$ ,  $p = .06$ , CFI = 1.00, NFI = .99 and RMSEA = .01. In line with interest organizations, involvement in activist organizations affects civic mindedness and skills, both for passive and active involvement. And, again, active members trust politics much less than passive members, and for both, the less they trust politics, the more collective activities they do. Yet, individual activities stand out. Active but especially passive activist members engage in individual activities, affected by civic mindedness and skills (passive total .55, direct .47 and indirect .02 via trust and .08 via efficacy; active total .41, direct .33 and indirect .02 via trust and .09 via efficacy, all significant at  $p < .001$  level). Active members do undertake collective activities—although less than active interest members—affected by their civic mindedness and skills (total .14, direct .11 and indirect .01 via trust and .03 via political interest, all significant at  $p < .001$ ). Note that efficacy has again a negative indirect effect on collective activities. Passive members, on the other hand, undertake the least collective activities of all (total  $-.12$ ,  $p < .001$ ), indirectly caused by feelings of inefficaciousness ( $-.10$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In line with interest organizations, finally, passive members more often cast a vote than active members (total passive .16 vs. total active .05,  $p < .001$ ), yet this is not significantly affected by civic mindedness nor skills.

## Discussion

Does civic participation stimulate political action through civic mindedness and skills? This study shows that it depends on the combined effect of type and intensity on political activities. In a nutshell, leisure organizations do function as democratic workshops but only marginally so, passive membership only directly affects individualized activities yet not indirectly through civic mindedness or civic skills. Active membership of leisure organizations does stimulate individualized political activities through civic skills, but not collective activities. Moreover, active leisure membership is directly associated with the highest level of voting, yet this is not indirectly stimulated through civic mindedness or civic skills. Hence, we know that individuals active in leisure organizations are the ones who cast their votes, but civic skills and civic mindedness as assessed in this study does not explain why this is the case.

Involvement in interest and activist organizations does however stimulate political activity, especially for those actively involved and especially for collective noninstitutionalized activities. Interest and activist organizations coordinate, organize, and mobilize for collective action; as such active involvement directly

stimulates collective activities, but also indirectly through nurturing political interest and political trust (see also Louis, Amiot, Thomas, & Blackwood, 2016). Taken together these results replicate the findings of van der Meer and van Ingen (2009) that interest and activist organizations nurture civic skills and civic mindedness more than leisure organizations.

Are these findings restricted to this specific sample of demonstrators, or can they be generalized to citizens in general? Our “supercitizens” may not be very representative of citizens in general. As for the observed direct effects of type and intensity of involvement on political activities, these may be stronger but not unique for this sample, but the indirect effects might be more specific for demonstrators. In fact, van der Meer and van Ingen (2009) did not find this mediation. They therefore conclude that civic organizations are “pools” rather than “schools” of democracy. In other words, they pool together the more civic minded and skilled citizens rather than providing a space where people acquire these virtues and skills. Obviously, correlational designs cannot confirm this idea, but we *did* find indirect effects. Perhaps we found those indirect effects due to the high power of our design, given the overrepresentation of hyperaffiliated citizens who are regular participants in uncommon political activities, or because we distinguished individualized from collective activities. Moreover, the indirect effects leave much variation unexplained, especially for individualized activities. Be this as it may, type and intensity of involvement do affect various political activities via civic mindedness and skills, but more research is needed.

We discuss the theoretical and practical implications of these findings, as well as the limitations of the current studies, below. First and foremost, they show that it is essential to treat individual and collective noninstitutionalized political activities separately, as they are differentially affected by the type, and intensity of civic participation. This was conceived of theoretically and corroborated empirically—we argued that the one political activity requires more coordination, organization, and mobilization of resources than the other. Take intensity, both Wollebæk and Selle (2002) and van der Meer and van Ingen (2009) found that passive members showed much higher levels of social capital (Wollebæk & Selle, 2002) and political action (van der Meer and van Ingen, 2009) than noninvolved, whereas the additional effects of active participation were marginal. Our passive members showed also higher levels of social capital/political action than noninvolved, but, contrary to their findings, the additional effects of active participation were significant. While Wollebæk and Selle treated interest and activist organizations as one category (i.e., political organizations), we, building on van der Meer and van Ingen, differentiated between interest and activist organizations. Yet, van der Meer and van Ingen collapsed noninstitutional political activities into one measure, while we distinguished between individualized and collective activities. Had we neglected the variation in interest and activist organizations and collapsed the political activities into a single measure, we would not have discerned the

diverging patterns of political activity spurred by differences in type, and intensity. Yet, it is precisely in this interaction of type and intensity on various activities where we find the most interesting results.

It is worth comparing for instance the political repertoire of those passively and actively involved in interest and activist organizations. Passive members of interest organizations are the least active in movement politics, but they vote the most. Passive members of activist organizations prefer individualized activities, but are the least active in collective activities. Active members of interest organizations prefer collective activities, while active members of activist organizations employ both individualized and collective activities, but vote the least. Interest organizations, for example, labor unions, still specialize in staging collective action and accrue the necessary resources to do so, while new social movement organizations professionalize and reduce the role of members and supporters to “checkbook activism” (Stolle et al., 2005). As a result, their passive and active members’ political actions do not only differ quantitatively, they also embark on qualitatively different political activities.

Two limitations of this study should be noted. Civic organizations might be pools or schools of democracy, or citizens’ civic virtues and political activities might come about by a combination of the selection mechanism (pools) and the socialization mechanism (schools). As our data are correlational we are not able to formulate and test strict causal reasoning. Future research, based on longitudinal designs or experiments, might focus on these causal issues. One aspect we did not cover is that civic organizations create essential networks and opportunities for mobilization and participation in political activities (e.g., Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). The relation between networks and opportunities for participation, and if collective activities are more affected by embeddedness than individual ones, might present fruitful directions for future research.

### *Implications of Our Findings*

In terms of practical implications, the paper first and foremost shows that *the* activist does not exist. People active in leisure organizations differ from those who are checkbook-members of interest-organizations, who in turn, are different from activists. Thus, different activists are attracted by different organizations, and, in all likelihood, different incentives will motivate them to sustain their activism. Yet, this needs future research. Another point relates to aging activists. The 45–64 cohort is the *most* active group, both in interest and activist organizations, whereas the 25–44 group is the *less* active group, again both in interest and activist organizations. Organizations should either be innovative and creative to get and hold the young people aboard, or change to a checkbook organization run by a small team of professionals. As our data reveals, young people *are* willing to

voluntary contribute to civil society, yet, mainly as passive members or to perform individualized forms of politics and consumerism.

The less people trust politicians, the more collective noninstitutionalized activities they undertake, and the less likely they are to cast a vote. Passive members of interest and activist organizations put the *most* faith in institutionalized politics, while their active fellows put the *least* faith in institutionalized politics. Those who trust politicians can afford restricted investment in civics, and checkbook membership suffices. Contrary to those who distrust politicians, they feel the urge to invest time and energy, as democratic watchdogs they try to influence politics via noninstitutionalized politics. In fact, following the noninvolved, active activist-members are the least likely to cast a vote. For them, individualized and collective noninstitutionalized politics partly *substitute* the institutionalized politics they distrust, while for active members of interest organizations *collective* non institutionalized politics *add* to institutionalized politics.

Does checkbook activism “crowd out” other forms of affiliation? It depends. Compared to active members, checkbook members are affiliated with more rather than fewer organizations. Checkbook affiliation requires less time and energy, so people could affiliate with more organizations. Does checkbook activism then “crowd out” other forms of activism? Again, it depends. Checkbook members of interest organizations undertake indeed relatively fewer collective activities compared to active members of interest organizations, but still as much as active members of activist organizations. They undertake also relatively fewer individualized activities, yet, those actively involved in interest organizations do neither. If crowding out does takes place, it is for checkbook members of activist organizations—given the negative relation between membership and collective activities—yet they compensate their inactivity in collective activities by the largest involvement in individual activities. Hence, rather than crowding out, citizens’ engagement is moving away from organized actions to individualized modes of politics (cf. Micheletti, 2003), especially for checkbook members of activist organizations. Underlying this, might be what Lichterman (1996) calls “personalism”: people feel a personal sense of political responsibility rather than feeling restricted or obliged to a community or group. The role of organizations in coordinating, organizing, and mobilizing individualized activities clearly needs more research. The same goes for the challenge of organizers to visualize the effects of unseen individualized activities their constituency undertakes, so that they can be framed and claimed as a movement success.

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JACQUELIEN VAN STEKELENBURG is Associate Professor in the Sociology Department at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. She studies the social psychological dynamics of protest participation. She edited (with Roggeband and

Klandermans) *The Future of Social Movement Research: Dynamics, Mechanisms and Processes* (2013). She is currently working on a comparative study on street demonstrations (with Klandermans and Walgrave) and a study on emerging networks and feelings of belonging.

BERT KLANDERMANS is Professor in Applied Social Psychology at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam. He has published extensively on the social psychology of protest and social movement participation. He authored the now classic *Social Psychology of Protest* (1997). He coedited (with Conny Roggeband) *Handbook of Social movements across disciplines* (2007). He is the editor of *Sociopedia.isa*—an online database of review articles—in collaboration with the *International Sociological Association*. He is coeditor of Blackwell/Wiley's *Encyclopedia of Social Movements* and *The Future of Social Movement Research. Dynamics, Mechanisms, and Processes* (2013). He received the Harold Lasswell Award of the International Society of Political Psychology for his lifelong contribution to political psychology (2013) and the John D. McCarthy Award from Notre Dame University for his contribution to the study of social movements and collective action (2014).

AGNES AKKERMAN is Professor of Sustainable Cooperation in Labor Relations Department at Sociology of Groningen University and Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam. Her research interests include voice and protest at the workplace and spill-over effects of workplace conflict.